

Amendment dated 11/18/2004

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE *UTILITY PATENT*

Applicant:	O'Brien	Attorney Docket No.:	60655.3500
Serial No.:	09/706,194	Group Art Unit:	2175
Filed:	November 30, 2000	Examiner:	Samuel G. Rimell
Title::	COMPUTER SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR DETERMINING A TRAVEL SCHEME MINIMIZING TRAVEL COSTS FOR AN ORGANIZATION	Confirmation No.:	5463

REPLY under 37 C.F.R. 1.111

Mail Stop Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Commissioner:

In reply to the Office Action dated August 19, 2004, please amend the above-identified application as follows and consider the Amendments and Remarks beginning on the following page.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 2 of this paper.

Remarks/Arguments begin on page 35 of this paper.

Amendments To Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Original) In a computer system having a data input device, a data storage device, and a processor, a method for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

- obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links via the data input device;

- storing the travel information via the data storage device;

- constructing an objective function from the travel information via the processor, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

- constructing a set of constraints from the travel information via the processor, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

- applying the constraints to the objective function via the processor to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs of the organization; and

- applying the solution as the travel scheme for minimizing travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with the solution.

2. (Original) The computer system of claim 1 wherein the obtaining travel information step comprises the steps of:

- obtaining travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;

- obtaining demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and

- obtaining carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

3. (Original) The computer system of claim 2 wherein the processor determines from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

4. (Original) The computer system of claim 3 wherein the objective function comprises the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

5. (Original) The computer system of claim 4 wherein the solution comprises a solution value for each variable.

6. (Original) The computer system of claim 5 wherein the processor determines lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

7. (Original) The computer system of claim 5 wherein the processor determines lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

8. (Original) The computer system of claim 4 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

9. (Original) The computer system of claim 2 wherein the processor determines the obtained information in the form of a table.

10. (Original) The computer system of claim 9 wherein the processor organizes organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

11. (Original) The computer system of claim 10 wherein the processor organizes the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and carrier goal information according to each carrier.

12. (Original) The computer system of claim 11 wherein the processor employs linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

13. (Original) The computer system of claim 12 wherein the processor organizes the solution in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

14. (Original) The computer system of claim 2 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

15. (Original) The computer system of claim 2 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

16. (Original) The computer system of claim 2 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

17. (Original) The computer system of claim 1 wherein the processor employs linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

18. (Original) A method for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links;
constructing an objective function from the travel information, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;
constructing a set of constraints from the travel information, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;
applying the constraints to the objective function to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs of the organization; and
applying the solution as the travel scheme for minimizing travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with the solution.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the obtaining travel information step comprises the steps of:

obtaining travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;
obtaining demand and-supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and
obtaining carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of determining from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein the objective function comprises the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein the solution comprises a solution value for each variable.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

25. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

26. (Original) The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of organizing the obtained information in the form of a table.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26 wherein the organizing step comprises organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27 wherein the organizing step further comprises organizing the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information according to each carrier.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29 further comprising the step of organizing the solution in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

31. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

32. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

33. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

34. (Original) The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

35. (Original) A computer system for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the system comprising:

- a data input device for receiving travel information relating to the carriers and the links;

- a data storage device for storing the travel information received by the data input device;

- a programmed processor for constructing an objective function from the travel information, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links; and

- a programmed processor for constructing a set of constraints from the travel information, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

the processor for applying the constraints to the objective function to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs the organization;

the solution for being applied as the travel scheme for minimizing travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with the solution.

36. (Original) The computer system of claim 35 wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link, demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier, and carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

37. (Original) The computer system of claim 36 wherein the processor determines from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

38. (Original) The computer system of claim 37 wherein the objective function comprises the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

39. (Original) The computer system of claim 38 wherein the solution comprises a solution value for each variable.

40. (Original) The computer system of claim 39 wherein lower and upper limits for each constraint are determined by the processor, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

41. (Original) The computer system of claim 39 wherein lower and upper limits for each solution value are determined by the processor, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

42. (Original) The computer system of claim 38 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

43. (Original) The computer system of claim 42 wherein the goal constraint comprises a predetermined discount from a particular carrier only if the carrier receives a minimum predetermined amount of business from the organization.

44. (Original) The computer system of claim 36 wherein the information retrieved by the processor is organized in the form of a table.

45. (Original) The computer system of claim 44 wherein the table is organized with each of the plurality of links laid out in a first direction and each of the plurality of carriers laid out in a second direction, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

46. (Original) The computer system of claim 45 wherein the link demand information is organized according to each link and wherein the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information is organized according to each carrier.

47. (Original) The computer system of claim 46 further comprising software for extracting information from the table to construct the objective function and the set of constraints and linear programming software for applying the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

48. (Original) The computer system of claim 47 wherein the solution is organized in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

49. (Original) The computer system of claim 36 further comprising a means for acquiring travel data from a computerized reservation system, wherein the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link is compiled at least in part from the travel data.

50. (Original) The computer system of claim 36 further comprising a generated historical travel data file having historical travel data, wherein the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link is compiled at least in part from the historical travel data.

51. (Original) The computer system of claim 36 further comprising a generated organization discount program data file having the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization.

52. (Original) The computer system of claim 36 wherein the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link includes a member of the group selected from an expected fare the carrier charges for traveling the link, any discounts the carrier provides to the organization, any added costs in connection with traveling the link using the carrier, any benefits received in connection with traveling the link using the carrier, the number of non-stop voyages available, the number of connecting voyages available, any expected transfer delays, the percentage of total voyages the carrier provides for the link, and a combination thereof.

53. (Original) The computer system of claim 35 further comprising software executed on the processor for extracting information from the table to construct the objective function and the set of constraints and linear programming software for applying the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

54. (Amended) A method for determining an optimum travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization traveling a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers by selectively allocating travel trips on each link to the carriers serving the link, comprising the steps of:

- (a) determining travel information representative of the links and the carriers serving the links;

- (b) determining constraints on allocating the trips to the carriers;
- (c) prospectively allocating the trips among the carriers in accordance with the travel information and the constraints to provide a travel scheme;
- (d) determining a cost of the travel scheme of step (c);
- (e) ascertaining whether any of the travel information or constraints have changed;
- (f) if any of the travel information or constraints have changed, then repeating steps (c), (d), and (e) until the optimum travel scheme minimizing the travel costs in accordance with the travel information and the constraints is determined; and
- (g) applying the optimum travel scheme to minimize travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with such optimum travel scheme.

55. (Original) The method of claim 54 wherein the determining travel information step comprises the steps of:

- obtaining travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;
- obtaining demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and
- obtaining carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

56. (Original) The method of claim 55 further comprising the step of determining from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

57. (Original) The method of claim 56 wherein the cost of the travel scheme comprises a function representing the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

58. (Original) The method of claim 57 wherein the optimum travel scheme comprises a solution value for each variable.

59. (Original) The method of claim 58 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the optimum travel scheme.

60. (Original) The method of claim 58 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the optimum travel scheme.

61. (Original) The method of claim 57 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

62. (Original) The method of claim 55 further comprising the step of organizing the obtained information in the form of a table.

63. (Original) The method of claim 62 wherein the organizing step comprises organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

64. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein the organizing step further comprises organizing the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information according to each carrier.

65. (Original) The method of claim 64 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to a function representing the cost of the travel scheme to determine the optimum travel scheme.

66. (Original) The method of claim 65 further comprising the step of organizing the optimum travel scheme in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

67. (Original) The method of claim 55 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

68. (Original) The method of claim 55 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

69. (Original) The method of claim 55 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

70. (Original) The method of claim 54 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to determine a solution.

71. (Previously Presented) In a computer system having a data input device, a data storage device, and a processor, a method for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

- obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links via the data input device;

- storing the travel information via the data storage device;

- constructing an objective function from the travel information via the processor, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

- constructing a set of constraints from the travel information via the processor, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

applying the constraints to the objective function via the processor to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs of the organization; and
generating output report data representative of the solution.

72. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 71 wherein the obtaining travel information step comprises the steps of:

obtaining travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;
obtaining demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and
obtaining carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

73. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 72 wherein the processor determines from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

74. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 73 wherein the objective function comprises the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

75. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 74 wherein the solution comprises a solution value for each variable.

76. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 75 wherein the processor determines lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

77. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 75 wherein the processor determines lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

78. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 74 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

79. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 72 wherein the processor determines the obtained information in the form of a table.

80. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 79 wherein the processor organizes organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

81. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 80 wherein the processor organizes the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and carrier goal information according to each carrier.

82. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 81 wherein the processor employs linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

83. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 82 wherein the processor organizes the solution in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

84. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 72 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

85. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 72 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

86. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 72 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

87. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 71 wherein the processor employs linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

88. (Previously Presented) A method for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

- obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links;

- constructing an objective function from the travel information, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

- constructing a set of constraints from the travel information, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

- applying the constraints to the objective function to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs of the organization; and

- generating a report representative of the solution.

89. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 88 wherein the obtaining travel information step comprises the steps of:

- obtaining travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;
- obtaining demand and-supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and
- obtaining carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

90. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 89 further comprising the step of determining from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

91. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 90 wherein the objective function comprises the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

92. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 91 wherein the solution comprises a solution value for each variable.

93. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 92 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

94. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 92 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

95. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 91 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the

link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

96. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 89 further comprising the step of organizing the obtained information in the form of a table.

97. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 96 wherein the organizing step comprises organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

98. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 97 wherein the organizing step further comprises organizing the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information according to each carrier.

99. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 98 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

100. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 99 further comprising the step of organizing the solution in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

101. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 89 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

102. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 89 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

103. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 89 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

104. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 88 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

105. (Previously Presented) A computer system for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the system comprising:

- a data input device for receiving travel information relating to the carriers and the links

- a data storage device for storing the travel information received by the data input device;

- a programmed processor for constructing an objective function from the travel information, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

- a programmed processor for constructing a set of constraints from the travel information, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

- a processor for applying the constraints to the objective function to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs the organization; and

- a data output device for generating a report representative of the solution.

106. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 105 wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link, demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected

supply for each carrier, and carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

107. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 106 wherein the processor determines from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

108. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 107 wherein the objective function comprises the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

109. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 108 wherein the solution comprises a solution value for each variable.

110. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 109 wherein lower and upper limits for each constraint are determined by the processor, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

111. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 109 wherein lower and upper limits for each solution value are determined by the processor, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the determined solution.

112. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 108 wherein the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints, the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all

links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

113. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 112 wherein the goal constraint comprises a predetermined discount from a particular carrier only if the carrier receives a minimum predetermined amount of business from the organization.

114. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 106 wherein the information retrieved by the processor is organized in the form of a table.

115. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 114 wherein the table is organized with each of the plurality of links laid out in a first direction and each of the plurality of carriers laid out in a second direction, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

116. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 115 wherein the link demand information is organized according to each link and wherein the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information is organized according to each carrier.

117. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 116 further comprising software for extracting information from the table to construct the objective function and the set of constraints and linear programming software for applying the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

118. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 117 wherein the solution is organized in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

119. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 106 further comprising a means for acquiring travel data from a computerized reservation system, wherein the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link is compiled at least in part from the travel data.

120. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 106 further comprising a generated historical travel data file having historical travel data, wherein the travel cost

information for each link for each carrier serving the link is compiled at least in part from the historical travel data.

121. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 106 further comprising a generated organization discount program data file having the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization.

122. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 106 wherein the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link includes a member of the group selected from an expected fare the carrier charges for traveling the link, any discounts the carrier provides to the organization, any added costs in connection with traveling the link using the carrier, any benefits received in connection with traveling the link using the carrier, the number of non-stop voyages available, the number of connecting voyages available, any expected transfer delays, the percentage of total voyages the carrier provides for the link, and a combination thereof.

123. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 105 further comprising software executed on the processor for extracting information from the table to construct the objective function and the set of constraints and linear programming software for applying the constraints to the objective function to determine the solution.

124. (Amended) A method for determining an optimum travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization for traveling a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers by selectively allocating travel trips on each link to the carriers serving the link, comprising the steps of:

- (a) determining travel information representative of the links and the carriers serving the links, wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information, demand and supply information, and carrier goal information;
- (b) determining constraints, from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, on allocating the trips to the carriers, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints;
- (c) prospectively allocating the trips among the carriers in accordance with the travel information and the constraints to provide a travel scheme;

- (d) determining a cost of the travel scheme of step (c);
- (e) ascertaining whether any of the travel information or constraints should be changed;
- (f) if any of the travel information or constraints have changed, then repeating steps (c), (d), and (e) until the optimum travel scheme minimizing the travel costs in accordance with the travel information and the constraints is determined; and
- (g) generating a report representative of the optimum travel scheme.

125. (Amended) The method of claim 124 wherein the determining travel information step comprises the steps of:

- obtaining the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;
- obtaining the demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and
- obtaining the carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

126. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 125 further comprising the step of determining from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

127. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 126 wherein the cost of the travel scheme comprises a function representing the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

128. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 127 wherein the optimum travel scheme comprises a solution value for each variable.

129. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 128 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the optimum travel scheme.

130. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 128 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the optimum travel scheme.

131. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 127 wherein [the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints,] the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

132. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 125 further comprising the step of organizing the obtained information in the form of a table.

133. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 132 wherein the organizing step comprises organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

134. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the organizing step further comprises organizing the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information according to each carrier.

135. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 134 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to a function representing the cost of the travel scheme to determine the optimum travel scheme.

136. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 135 further comprising the step of organizing the optimum travel scheme in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

137. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 125 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

138. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 125 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

139. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 125 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

140. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 124 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to determine a solution.

141. (Amended) A method for determining an optimum travel scheme for an organization for [traveling] a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers, comprising the steps of:

(a) determining travel information representative of the travel links and the travel carriers serving the travel links, wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information, demand and supply information, and carrier goal information;

(b) determining constraints, from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, on allocating travel trips to the travel carriers, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints to provide the optimal travel scheme; and

(c) allocating the travel trips among the travel carriers in accordance with the travel information and the constraints to provide the optimum travel scheme.

142. (Amended) The method of claim 141 wherein the determining travel information step comprises the steps of:

obtaining the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;

obtaining the demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and

obtaining the carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

143. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 further comprising the step of determining from the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link a weighted value representing an actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier.

144. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 143 wherein the cost of the travel scheme comprises a function representing the sum of a travel cost for each link, the travel cost for each link comprising the sum of a travel cost for each carrier serving the link, the travel cost for each carrier serving the link comprising the weighted value representing the actual cost to the organization for traveling the link using the carrier multiplied by a variable representing a number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for the link.

145. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 144 wherein the optimum travel scheme comprises a solution value for each variable.

146. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 145 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each constraint, each constraint being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the optimum travel scheme.

147. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 145 further comprising the step of determining lower and upper limits for each solution value, each solution value being adjustable between the limits while maintaining the optimum travel scheme.

148. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 144 wherein [the constraints are derived from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints

comprising link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints,] the link demand constraints requiring that for each link the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from all carriers for the link be equal to the projected demand for the link, each carrier supply constraint requiring that for a particular carrier the sum of the variables representing the number of trips to be purchased from the carrier for all links be in a predetermined range, each carrier goal constraint requiring that the goal the organization has with respect to a particular carrier be accomplished.

149. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 further comprising the step of organizing the obtained information in the form of a table.

150. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 149 wherein the organizing step comprises organizing each of the plurality of links in a first direction on the table and each of the plurality of carriers in a second direction on the table, each carrier serving each link being designated by a cell on the table having information pertaining to the carrier serving the link.

151. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 150 wherein the organizing step further comprises organizing the link demand information according to each link and the carrier supply information and the carrier goal information according to each carrier.

152. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 151 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to apply the constraints to a function representing the cost of the travel scheme to determine the optimum travel scheme.

153. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 152 further comprising the step of organizing the optimum travel scheme in the form of a table corresponding to the table of the obtained information.

154. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring current travel data from a computerized reservation system.

155. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 wherein the obtaining travel cost information step comprises acquiring previously generated historical travel data from a historical travel data file.

156. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 wherein the obtaining demand and supply information and obtaining carrier goal information steps comprise acquiring the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information for the organization from a previously generated organization discount program data file.

157. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 141 further comprising the step of employing linear programming to determine a solution.

158. (Previously Presented) An article of manufacture for use in a computer system having a data input device, a data storage device, and a processor, the article of manufacture comprising a computer readable medium holding computer executable instructions for performing a method for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

- obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links via the data input device;

- storing the travel information via the data storage device;

- constructing an objective function from the travel information via the processor, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

- constructing a set of constraints from the travel information via the processor, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

- applying the constraints to the objective function via the processor to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs of the organization; and

applying the solution as the travel scheme for minimizing travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with the solution.

159. (Previously Presented) An article of manufacture for determining a travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the article of manufacture comprising a computer-readable medium holding computer-executable instructions for performing a method comprising the steps of:

obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links;

constructing an objective function from the travel information, the objective function representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

constructing a set of constraints from the travel information, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the objective function;

applying the constraints to the objective function to determine a solution of the objective function that satisfies the constraints and that minimizes the travel costs of the organization; and

applying the solution as the travel scheme for minimizing travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with the solution.

160. (Amended) An article of manufacture for determining an optimum travel scheme for minimizing travel costs for traveling a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers by selectively allocating travel trips on each link to the carriers serving the link, the article of manufacture comprising a computer-readable medium holding computer-executable instructions for performing a method comprising the steps of:

(a) determining travel information representative of the links and the carriers serving the links, wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information, demand and supply information, and carrier goal information;

(b) determining constraints, from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, on allocating the trips to the carriers, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints;

- (c) prospectively allocating the trips among the carriers in accordance with the travel information and the constraints to provide a travel scheme;
- (d) determining a cost of the travel scheme of step (c);
- (e) ascertaining whether any of the travel information or constraints should be changed;
- (f) if any of the travel information or constraints have changed, then repeating steps (c), (d), and (e) until the optimum travel scheme minimizing the travel costs in accordance with the travel information and the constraints is determined; and
- (g) applying the optimum travel scheme to minimize travel costs by purchasing travel trips in accordance with such optimum travel scheme.

161. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 141 wherein the travel scheme comprises a preferred travel scenario.

162. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 141 wherein determining travel information includes receiving input from one or more users.

163. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 141 further comprising:
(d) determining a cost of the travel scheme.

164. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 163 further comprising:
(e) ascertaining whether any of the travel information or constraints should be changed
(f) if the travel information or constraints have changed, repeating steps (c), (e), and (d) until an optimum travel scheme minimizing the travel costs in accordance with the travel information and the constraints is determined.

165. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 164 further comprising:
(g) generating output data representative of the travel scheme.

166. (Amended) An apparatus for determining an optimum travel scheme for an organization for [traveling] a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers, comprising the steps of:

(a) means for determining travel information representative of the travel links and the travel carriers serving the travel links, wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information, demand and supply information, and carrier goal information;

(b) means for determining constraints, from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, on allocating travel trips to the travel carriers, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints; and

(c) means for prospectively allocating the travel trips among the travel carriers in accordance with the travel information and the constraints to provide the optimum travel scheme.

167. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 166 wherein the means for determining travel information further comprises:

means for obtaining the travel cost information for each link for each carrier serving the link;

means for obtaining the demand and supply information pertaining to a projected demand for each link and a projected supply for each carrier; and

means for obtaining the carrier goal information pertaining to any predetermined goal the organization has with respect to any of the carriers.

168. (Amended) A method for determining an optimum travel scheme for an organization having a plurality of travelers traveling a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers, comprising the steps of:

(a) determining travel information relating to the travel links and the travel carriers serving the travel links including travel cost information for each carrier serving the links, supply and demand information for each link, and travel information regarding the organization;

(b) determining constraints, from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, on allocating travel trips to the travel carriers, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints;

- (c) allocating the travel trips among the travel carriers in accordance with the travel information and the constraints;
- (d) generating a travel scheme.

169. (Amended) A method for determining a cost-effective travel scheme for an organization, where the organization expects to purchase travel trips for a plurality of travelers for a plurality of predetermined travel links, each travel link comprising a travel origin and a travel destination, each travel link being served by at least one of a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

- obtaining travel information relating to the carriers and the links, wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information, demand and supply information, and carrier goal information;

- constructing a mathematical expression from the travel information, the mathematical expression representing a travel cost to the organization to purchase travel trips for the plurality of travelers for the plurality of predetermined links;

- constructing a set of constraints from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information [travel information], the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the mathematical expression, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints; and

- applying a mathematical programming solution technique to the mathematical expression and the set of constraints to find a solution of the mathematical expression corresponding to a lowest travel cost relative to a set of possible solutions of the mathematical expression.

170. (Amended) A method for determining a cost-effective travel scheme for traveling a plurality of travel links being served by a plurality of travel carriers, the method comprising the steps of:

- obtaining travel information relating to the plurality of travel links and the plurality of travel carriers, wherein the travel information comprises travel cost information, demand and supply information, and carrier goal information;

- constructing a travel scheme model from the travel information, the travel scheme model comprising a mathematical programming model;

constructing a set of constraints from the demand and supply information and the carrier goal information, the constraints comprising restrictions relating to the travel scheme model, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints; and

applying a mathematical programming solution technique to the travel scheme model and the set of constraints to find a solution of the travel scheme model corresponding to a lowest travel cost relative to a set of possible solutions of the travel scheme model.

171. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 170, wherein the mathematical programming model is a goal programming model.

172. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 170, wherein the mathematical programming model is a goal programming model and the mathematical programming solution technique is a linear programming solution technique.

REMARKS

In the August 19, 2004 Office Action, the Examiner allowed claims 1-123, 158, and 159, and rejected claims 124-157 and 160-172 pending in the application. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, Applicant amends claims 54, 124, 125, 131, 141, 142, 148, 160, and 166-170. Support for the amended claims may be found in the originally filed specification, and thus, no new matter is added by this amendment. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1-172 (16 independent claims; 172 total claims) remain pending in the application. Applicant requests reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating the allowance of claims 1-123, 158, and 159 in the Office Action. In addition, Applicant notes that the Examiner acknowledgment that Applicant's reply of May 24, 2004 complies with the Office Action of March 23, 2004. As requested, Applicant submits new formal drawings (6 Figures, 4 Drawing Sheets) with this reply to the Office Action.

CLAIM REJECTIONS FROM THE OFFICE ACTION

35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Claims 125-140, 142-157, and 167 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter. Applicant has amended independent claims 124, 141, and 166 to further clarify the invention. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the Section 112, second paragraph, rejection with respect to claims 125-140, 142-157, and 167.

35 U.S.C. §102(e) - Garback reference

Claims 124, 140, 141, 157, 160-166, and 168-169 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Garback, U.S. Patent No. 5,237,499, issued August 17, 1993 (hereinafter "Garback"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection and provides the following arguments in support.

Garback is limited to a computer travel planning system that processes travel requests directed to a specific venue from individual members of a sponsored group. With reference to Figures 2A-2E, the Garback system receives a travel request, retrieves travel information, and

checks the availability of airlines, hotel, and cars for the travel request. The Garback system will also perform pricing checks by checking published fares. Moreover, as noted by the Examiner, the Garback system is limited to just looking at the airline availability (see Figure 2A, block 47). Garback does not teach or suggest, *inter alia*, "determining constraints, from the demand and supply information **and** the carrier goal information, on allocating the trips to the carriers, wherein the constraints comprise link demand constraints, carrier supply constraints, and carrier goal constraints" (emphasis added) as set forth in amended independent claims 124, 141, 160, 166, 168, and 169. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and the withdrawal of the Section 102 rejection with respect to claims 124, 140, 141, 157, 160-166, and 168-169.

35 U.S.C. §102(b) - Garback reference

Claims 170-172 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Webber, U.S. Patent No. 5,021,953, issued June 4, 1991 (hereinafter "Webber"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection and provides the following arguments in support.

Webber is limited to a travel planner system that automatically constructs itineraries with available seats for a traveler's trip request. The Webber system will perform a satisfactory check on whether a connecting flight distance exceeds that of a possible direct flight by a preset distance or ratio. The Webber system will display the various available itineraries to the user. Webber is limited to just looking at the airline availability. Webber does not teach or suggest, *inter alia*, "constructing a set of constraints from the demand and supply information **and** the carrier goal information" (emphasis added) as set forth in amended independent claim 170. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and the withdrawal of the Section 102 rejection with respect to claims 170-172.

Support for Amended Claims

Below, Applicants have provided specific references to information contained in the specification, claims, and figures of application to support and disclose each and every element of the claims above.

For claims 124, 141, 160, 166, 168, 169, and 170 Applicants point examiner to column 1 line 50 through column 2 line 4 of the specification, among others, and Figs. 1, 3, 4, and 6 which support and disclose each and every element of claims 124, 141, 160, 166, 168, 169, and 170.

For claim 125, Applicants point examiner to claim 55, which support and disclose each and every element of claim 125.

For claim 131, Applicants point examiner to claim 61, which support and disclose each and every element of claim 131.

For claims 142 and 167 Applicants point examiner to column 6 lines 22 through 30, which support and disclose each and every element of claims 142 and 167.

148 Applicants point examiner to column 8 line 10 through column 9 line 13, which support and disclose each and every element of claim 148.

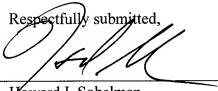
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims fully comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are allowable over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all pending claims is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 25, 2009

By: _____


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